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Machiavelli  
*Power, Secularism, and Instability*  

Friday, January 23, 2015, 4:00 pm  
Flowers 201, west campus  

Over five hundred years ago in Florence, in early 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli was arrested, imprisoned, and tortured, under suspicion (falsely, most probably) of involvement in an anti-government conspiracy. He was released in the spring of that year and placed under a mild form of house arrest, which he carried out at a family property south of Florence. During that time, he reflected on his own substantial experience as a traveling Florentine diplomat and, as importantly, on ancient Roman history. From that reflection emerged *The Prince*, the Italian Renaissance’s most famous book, which this lecture will showcase. Machiavelli wrote in a particular way: episodically, with short chapters that were suitable for conversations and letters. In addition to bringing this aspect into relief, this lecture will focus on Machiavelli’s views on the place of religion in politics, his considerations on the wielding of political power, both militarily and symbolically, and his haunting sense that instability and conflict were ever-present.